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The President's Daily Brief

26 April 1972

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~~*Top Secret*~~ 25X1

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

26 April 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

We report the latest military developments in Vietnam on *Page 1*.

In Laos, the North Vietnamese evidently intend to keep units southwest of the Plaine des Jarres to forestall the government's customary rainy season offensive. *(Page 2)*

President Sadat has been confronted with pointed questions reflecting public concern over the degree of Soviet support for Egypt. *(Page 3)*

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The Soviets are sending their first warships to Ceylon in three years in an effort to improve relations and counter Chinese and US influence. *(Page 5)*

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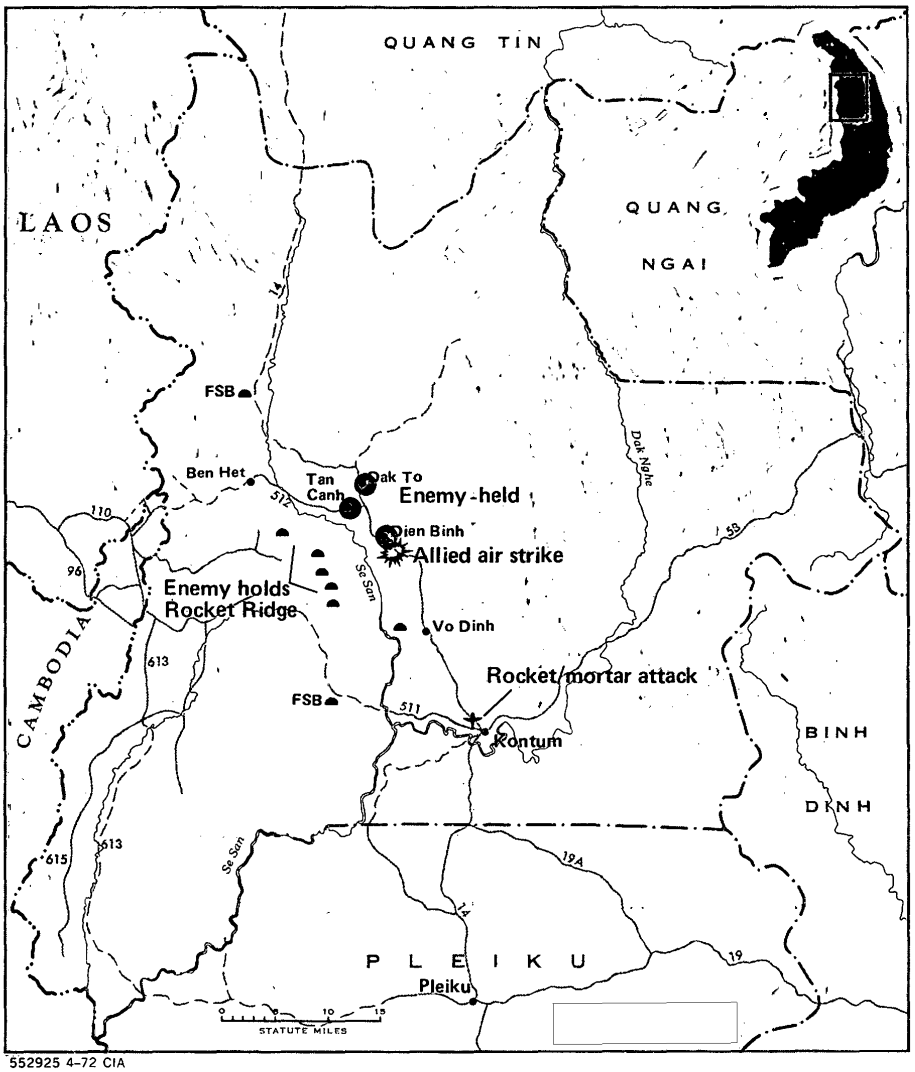
KONTUM PROVINCE



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VIETNAM

North Vietnamese forces continue to advance towards the capital of Kontum Province. Yesterday, enemy units moved down Route 14 as far as Dien Binh, but destruction of a key river bridge there by allied air strikes may have slowed their southward push. The Communists are also consolidating their positions in the Dak To area and are moving heavy artillery atop Rocket Ridge. Kontum city and the nearby airfield have been struck by rocket and mortar fire. Many of the refugees who have been streaming into the city are now heading south towards Pleiku. Remnants of the South Vietnamese 22nd Division continue to arrive at government-held positions [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] suggests that about half of those formerly in 25X1
the Dak To - Tan Canh area may be regrouped into a fighting force.

In the northern provinces there are numerous signs of enemy preparations for further attacks. In the south, the situation at An Loc remains stable and the South Vietnamese have taken advantage of a decrease in enemy shellings to reinforce and resupply by air the troops still holding on to the provincial capital. Although enemy action remains fairly high in the delta provinces, no significant gains have been made by either side in the past several days.

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[redacted]

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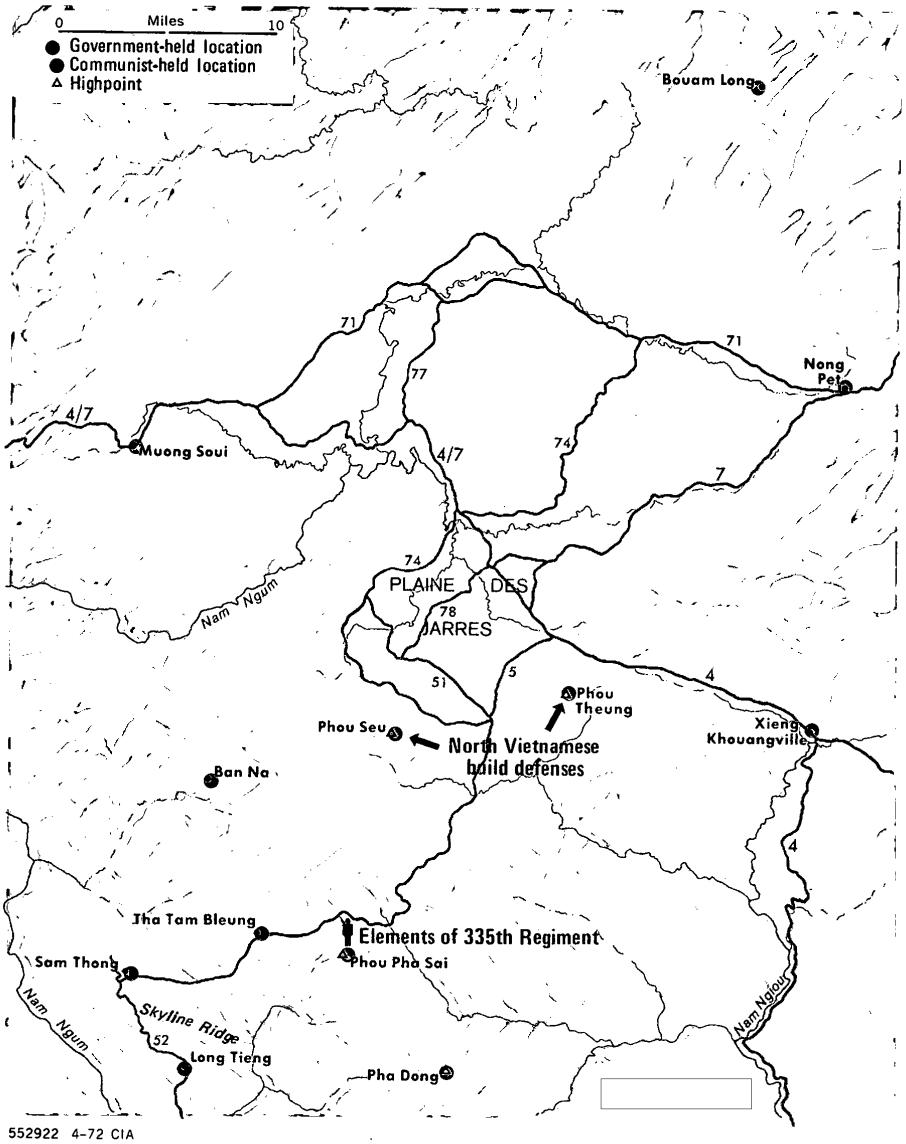
LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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LAOS

Intercepts indicate the North Vietnamese are preparing to forestall the government's customary rainy season effort to regain lost territory and intend to keep units in the area southwest of the Plaine des Jarres. Elements of the 148th Regiment of the 316th Division are maintaining their positions on Skyline Ridge close to Long Tieng and could launch renewed local attacks at any time. The 335th Regiment, which recently moved to the Phou Pha Sai area, has been told to hold the "central line throughout the rainy season." Troops are to build bunkers and send out patrols "to discover enemy reconnaissance teams who may come to survey our area for their offensive later on." Other messages indicate that Communist artillery units are digging in along the periphery of the Plaine des Jarres.

Recent communications suggest that the 312th Division, which has been active in Laos since the beginning of the dry season offensive, is about to move. No units of the 312th have yet been detected leaving the Long Tieng - Sam Thong area, however.

The 312th presumably is returning to North Vietnam to rest and refit. Until it was introduced into north Laos in late 1969, the 312th Division had a garrison and training mission in the Hanoi area. Before its return to northern Laos last fall, it was stationed near Vinh.

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EGYPT-USSR

During recent meetings with various Egyptian groups, President Sadat has been confronted with pointed questions reflecting public concern over the degree of Soviet support for Egypt. He has been asked to what extent Moscow is committed to supplying weapons to counter the delivery of US aircraft to Israel, and whether the Soviets in fact refused to supply Egypt with MIG-23s or their equivalent. Other queries reflected concern that Cairo was too closely aligned with Moscow and raised the possibility of obtaining offensive weapons from countries other than the Soviet Union.

For the most part, Sadat attempted to reassure his audience that Moscow was continuing to supply Egypt with needed military equipment. He added a frank description of the Egyptian-Soviet military relationship when he stated that he was willing to accept assistance from both the East and the West, but that if only the Soviet Union is willing to help, "I cannot say no." Sadat denied that there was any Soviet pressure for the establishment of military bases in Egypt, and repeatedly declared that he would not grant that privilege to anybody.

The public concern over this issue is not likely to force Sadat to alter the relationship between the two countries. It could, in fact, give him a further argument for future arms requests from the Soviet Union.

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WEST GERMANY

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CEYLON-USSR-CHINA

Two Soviet destroyers are scheduled to visit Ceylon for six days beginning on 28 April--the first such visit by Soviet naval combatants to Ceylon in three years. [redacted] 25X1

In addition, Chargé Peterson reports that the Ceylonese have agreed to a high-level Soviet visit to take place no earlier than July.

Soviet-Ceylonese relations have been under some strain during the past year, largely because of Ceylon's apparently unfounded suspicions that Moscow had something to do with the island-wide insurrection that wracked Ceylon a year ago. Moreover, Prime Minister Bandaranaike's party has been bickering lately with its Moscow-oriented Communist coalition partners. The Soviets may hope that a show of friendship will reduce the possibility that Colombo's irritation at the local Communists could encompass Moscow as well.

The Soviets may also want to test Ceylonese "nonalignment" in the wake of recent visits to Ceylon by US naval ships and Admiral McCain and to counter recent Chinese activity. Peking's recent moves include a $1.5-million interest-free credit for purchasing ships to take part in a new joint shipping service between the two countries. [redacted] 25X1

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Soviet

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NOTES

USSR-Cuba: [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

Thailand-China: General Praphat, the deputy chairman of the ruling military council, has told Ambassador Unger that Bangkok regards the prospective trip of a Thai sports team to Peking as a trial balloon. If it materializes, the trip would be an important step in Thailand's guarded effort to establish contacts with Peking in the wake of developments in US-Chinese relations. The Thai, however, remain suspicious of Chinese intentions, particularly with regard to support of Thai insurgents, and probably will continue for some time to ban private trade and other contacts with China.

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